

**ACTIVITY:** Swimming

**CASE:** GSAF 1935.09.21

**DATE:** Saturday September 21, 1935

**LOCATION:** The attack took place at Brown's Inlet on New River, Onslow Beach, about ten miles from Jacksonville, North Carolina, USA. The part of the beach where the incident took place is now occupied by the Camp Lejeune Marine Base.

**NAME:** Jere Fountain

**DESCRIPTION:** The swimmer was a 38-year-old male from Jacksonville. He loved to swim. His daughter, Frances, remembers watching him floating far out on the waves while smoking his pipe. Fountain and his family used to spend a week every summer at Onslow Beach.



## BACKGROUND

**MOON PHASE:** Third Quarter, September 19, 1935

**SEA CONDITIONS:** At New River, high tide was at 06h46; low tide was at 12h01.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Onslow Beach is a 12-kilometre undeveloped barrier island beach owned by the US Marine Corp. In 1935 there was only one house on the beach, owned by Ned Anderson, and it was rustic, primitive with no inside plumbing, electricity or telephone. Back then, the only way to get to the beach was to cross the inland waterway in a row boat. Northern Onslow Beach is separated from Brown's Island, a 5.6-kilometred undeveloped barrier island, by Browns Inlet. New River and Browns Inlets are transitional mixed energy (wave dominated) inlets.

**DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:** "Waist-deep"

**TIME:** 20h30 [8:30 p.m.]

**NARRATIVE:** Jere Fountain, Jim Collins and Jim's father-in-law Paul Venters went to the beach for a weekend camping and fishing trip. They arrived at the beach just before dark and decided to take a swim before settling in. Since they were alone, they left their clothes on the beach. Fountain was ten feet from his friends when he called out, "Help me, something struck me." They went to him immediately, and he lost consciousness in their arms. When they carried him to the shore and laid him on the sand, they discovered something had bitten a large amount of tissue from his thigh.

**INJURY:** Fountain's femoral artery had been severed, and he bled to death. Coroner Kimmon Jones stated that teeth prints of a shark were plainly visible on Fountain's body.

**FIRST AID:** Fountain's friends tore clothes into strips and made a tourniquet for his leg in

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an attempt to stop the bleeding. Jim Collins rushed for the boat and Fountain's car to go for help, while his father-in-law stayed with the injured man on the beach. In his haste, Collins ran into a tree and wrecked the car. Then he thumbed a ride with a man in a pick-up truck. He told the driver to move over and let him drive because he had to get to Jacksonville and a doctor fast.

Several hours passed before Collins and Dr. John Henderson arrived back at the beach only to learn that Fountain died shortly after Collins left to seek help. Fountain died ten minutes after he was bitten by the shark.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Not identified

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Clay Creswell, GSAF

**REFERENCE:** The John R. Fountain Family of Onslow County, North Carolina, Being a Collection of Family Researches, Writings and References of Alvin Marcus Fountain and some Seventy Plus Other Members of the Family, published by his family in 1992.

*The Daily Times-News  
Monday, September 23, 1935*

## **ATTACK BY SHARK KILLS SWIMMER OFF N. C. COAST**

Jacksonville, N. C., Sept. 23.  
—(P)— Officers today continued investigations into the death Saturday night of Jere W. Fountain, 38, who bled to death on the beach, his leg nearly severed above the knee apparently by a shark's bite.

Coroner Kimmon Jones said imprints of a shark's teeth were plainly visible on Fountain's body, but he said he had never known of sharks to invade the inlet.

Jim Collins and Paul Venters, of Onslow county, who were swimming with Fountain Saturday night, said they heard Fountain call, "Come and help me. Something has struck me." He was brought to the beach and died 10 minutes later.

The dead man was a brother of Prof. A. M. Fountain of the N. C. State college faculty, and was a cousin of Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Brown.